CLAIMS

1. A method of establishing a connection between a first endpoint participating in a first protocol and a second endpoint participating in a second protocol including:

establishing a virtual service endpoint participating in the first protocol on a network device that is connected to the first endpoint and the second endpoint; and

forwarding to the second endpoint communication directed from the first endpoint to the virtual service endpoint.

2. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the virtual service endpoint participates in the second protocol.

3. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the virtual service endpoint includes a first half virtual service endpoint and a second half virtual service endpoint and wherein the first half virtual service endpoint participates in the first protocol and wherein the second half virtual service endpoint participates in the second protocol.

4. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein:

the first endpoint participates in a first protocol-specific network;

the second endpoint participates in a second protocol-specific network; and

the virtual service endpoint presents a first protocol-specific service endpoint to the first protocol-specific network, and presents a second protocol-specific service endpoint to the second protocol-specific network.

5. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein forwarding to the second endpoint includes using a forwarding table.

6. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein forwarding to the second endpoint includes using a forwarding table that includes a real interface and a corresponding virtual interface.

7. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein forwarding to the second endpoint includes using a forwarding table that includes a real interface and a corresponding virtual interface for the first endpoint and a real interface and a corresponding virtual interface for the second endpoint.

8. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein forwarding to the second endpoint includes:

connecting the virtual service endpoint to the first endpoint;

locating the virtual service endpoint in a forwarding table and finding the second endpoint; and

connecting the data path between the two endpoints.

9. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the virtual service endpoint includes a first half virtual service endpoint and a second half virtual service endpoint and wherein the first half virtual service endpoint participates in the first protocol and wherein the second half virtual service endpoint participates in the second protocol, wherein forwarding to the second endpoint includes:

establishing a connection between the first endpoint and the first half virtual service endpoint;

establishing a connection between the second endpoint and the second half virtual service endpoint;

and cross connecting the data path between the endpoints of the two connections.

10. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the virtual service endpoint maintains an identifier associated with an interface.

11. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the first protocol is ATM.

12. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the network device is an edge switch or a gateway switch.

13. A network device for establishing a connection between a first endpoint participating in a first protocol and a second endpoint participating in a second protocol including

a virtual service endpoint participating in the first protocol configured to forward to the second endpoint communication directed from the first endpoint to the virtual service endpoint

wherein the network device is connected to the first endpoint and the second endpoint.